

Submission

No 19

DRIVER AND ROAD USER DISTRACTION

Organisation: Non-Smokers' Movement of Australia Inc.

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Submission from the Non-Smokers' Movement of Australia Inc.(NSMA)

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this important discussion.

NSMA Inc. began in 1977, fighting for everybody's right to breathe clean air, free from the well-documented poisons in tobacco smoke.

If you can smell the smoke, then the poisons are going into your lungs and your family's lungs and doing them harm.

With many indoor workplaces smokefree, NSW Government finally agreed in 2008 that children should have protection from secondhand smoke in motor vehicles, by far the smallest "rooms" in which smoking occurs.

NSMA had already been calling for a general ban on smoking in vehicles due to the distractions involved in smoking (leading to dangerous driving) as well as the dangers to non-smokers, especially children, disabled and frail-aged, of secondhand smoke which can trigger deadly asthma, and other cardio-pulmonary conditions, as well as Sudden Infant Death Syndrome.

Then the use of mobile phones while driving became an added distraction, taking the focus from the dangers of smoking.

Neither is less dangerous than the other - smoking may simply be less visible now, but it should be remembered that smoking doesn't simply mean holding a cigarette to the mouth and sucking and blowing out the poisons.

Smoking is multi-operational :

Find the packet.

Extract a cigarette.

Find the lighter.

Light the cigarette.(An added challenge if matches are involved).

Put both packet and lighter away so you can find them again.

Take a drag, blow out the smoke.

Hold the cigarette out the window so the smoke doesn't blow into your eyes.

Ash the cigarette- (often out the window into some unsuspecting motorcyclist's face.)

Repeat the last three actions multiple times until the cigarette is finished.

Stub out the cigarette, somewhere (modern cars don't usually have ashtrays).

Carefully and thoughtfully dispose of the butt, without potentially starting one of the 4000 bushfires which occur each year due to tossed butts.

Meanwhile, concentrate on the myriad tasks of driving amongst other drivers who may be smoking, eating, slurping a drink, texting or reading or speaking on their mobile phones, arguing, putting on makeup, need I go on?

Staysafe Committee - Banning smoking in cars is already partly operational, in workplace vehicles, as well as to protect children under 16 from the poisons in secondhand tobacco smoke.

As you can see, there are many other reasons for banning smoking in cars, driver distractions being a major reason, and health being another.

We urge you to ban smoking in cars altogether, for the many reasons stated, as well as to simplify law-enforcement, which has been difficult with age-grouping of children.

At the same time, we urge you to do everything possible to reduce driver distractions in other ways, such as with electronic devices, with highway advertising, and with clear, unambiguous signage, everywhere.